

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-52 (canceled).

53. (New) A method of managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment via a computer network, said multi-enterprise environment including a manufacturing enterprise and at least one supply chain entity, comprising:

identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by a contract manufacturer that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to purchase by a buyer under an agreement with the contract manufacturer;

comparing the purchase prices incurred by the contract manufacturer with purchase prices available to the buyer for the same components from a component supplier;

for components in which the contract manufacturer incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the buyer, generating and transmitting to the component supplier a request to authorize the contract manufacturer to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the buyer; and

in response to an affirmative response by the component supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the contract manufacturer, the authorization letter authorizing the contract manufacturer to purchase the component directly from the component supplier.

54. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein the identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by a contract manufacturer is performed by:

receiving information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer; and

mapping the information received from the contract manufacturer to information relating to components purchased by the buyer;

wherein the information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer and the information relating to components purchased by the buyer include:

- a component number;
- a component name;
- a component description;
- a component purchase price; and
- a component availability.

55. (New) The method of claim 54, wherein the receiving information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer includes receiving the information in response to a notification awarding a contract bid to the contract manufacturer.

56. (New) The method of claim 55, wherein the information is received via at least one of:

- a website of the buyer;
- email; and
- an extranet.

57. (New) The method of claim 54, wherein the mapping includes mapping component information to at least one commodity.

58. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein the buyer is the manufacturing enterprise.

59. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein the contract manufacturer is the supplier enterprise.

60. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein the component supplier is the supplier enterprise.

61. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein the request comprises:
part numbers subject to authorization;
descriptions of the part numbers;
component volumes; and
contract price per unit.

62. (New) The method of claim 53, wherein the affirmative response by the component supplier includes a notification indicating approval of the request.

63. (New) The method of claim 62, wherein the authorization letter comprises an attachment comprising:

guidelines for the contract manufacturer to follow, comprising:

keeping pricing information confidential for a period of time;

the authorization is restricted to part numbers provided with the authorization letter; and

providing copies of purchase orders between the contract manufacturer and the component supplier to the buyer for tracking and reconciliation purposes; and

a request to provide a production bill of materials that factors in revisions to the purchase prices of components that reflect the purchase price available to the buyer.

64. (New) A method of managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment via a computer network, said multi-enterprise environment including a manufacturing enterprise and at least one supply chain entity, comprising:

identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by a contract manufacturer that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to

purchase by a buyer under an agreement with the contract manufacturer, the identifying performed by:

receiving information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer; and

mapping the information received from the contract manufacturer to information relating to components purchased by the buyer;

wherein the information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer and the information relating to components purchased by the buyer include:

a component number;

a component name;

a component description;

a component purchase price; and

a component availability;

comparing the purchase prices incurred by the contract manufacturer with purchase prices available to the buyer for the same components from a component supplier;

for components in which the contract manufacturer incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the buyer, generating and transmitting to the component supplier a request to authorize the contract manufacturer to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the buyer; and

in response to an affirmative response by the supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the contract manufacturer, the authorization letter authorizing the contract manufacturer to purchase the component directly from the component supplier.

65. (New) A system of managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment over a network, comprising:

- a host system at a manufacturing enterprise;

- a network link to a component supplier of the manufacturing enterprise;

- a network link to a contract manufacturer of the manufacturing enterprise; and

- an application executing on the host system, the application performing:

 - identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by the contract manufacturer that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to purchase by the manufacturing enterprise under an agreement with the contract manufacturer;

 - comparing the purchase prices incurred by the contract manufacturer with purchase prices available to the manufacturing enterprise for the same components from the component supplier;

 - for components in which the contract manufacturer incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise, generating and transmitting to the component supplier a request to authorize the contract manufacturer to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the manufacturing enterprise; and

 - in response to an affirmative response by the component supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the contract manufacturer, the authorization letter authorizing the contract manufacturer to purchase the component directly from the component supplier.

66. (New) The system of claim 65, wherein the identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by the contract manufacturer is performed by:

- receiving information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer;

- mapping the information received from the contract manufacturer to information relating to components purchased by the manufacturing enterprise;

wherein the information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer and the information relating to components purchased by the manufacturing enterprise include:

- a component number;
- a component name;
- a component description;
- a component purchase price; and
- a component availability.

67. (New) The system of claim 66, wherein the receiving information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer includes receiving the information in response to a notification awarding a contract bid to the contract manufacturer.

68. (New) The system of claim 67, wherein the information is received via at least one of:

- a website of the manufacturing enterprise;
- email; and
- an extranet.

69. (New) The system of claim 66, wherein the mapping includes mapping component information to at least one commodity.

70. (New) The method of claim 65, wherein the request comprises:
part numbers subject to authorization;
descriptions of the part numbers;
component volumes; and

contract price per unit.

71. (New) The method of claim 65, wherein the affirmative response by the component supplier includes a notification indicating approval of the request.

72. (New) The method of claim 71, wherein the authorization letter comprises an attachment comprising:

guidelines for the contract manufacturer to follow, comprising:

keeping pricing information confidential for a period of time;

the authorization is restricted to part numbers provided with the letter; and

providing copies of purchase orders between the contract manufacturer and the component supplier to the buyer for tracking and reconciliation purposes; and

a request to provide a production bill of materials that factors in revisions to the purchase prices of components that reflect the purchase price available to the buyer.

73. (New) A storage medium encoded with machine-readable computer program code for managing a supply chain within a multi-enterprise environment via a computer network, said multi-enterprise environment including a manufacturing enterprise and at least one supply chain entity, the computer program code including instructions for causing a processor to implement a method, comprising:

identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by a contract manufacturer that manufactures products using the components, the products subject to purchase by a buyer under an agreement with the contract manufacturer;

comparing the purchase prices incurred by the contract manufacturer with purchase prices available to the buyer for the same components from a component supplier;

for components in which the contract manufacturer incurs a purchase price greater than the purchase price available to the buyer, generating and transmitting to the

component supplier a request to authorize the contract manufacturer to purchase a quantity of the component from the component supplier at the purchase price available to the buyer; and

in response to an affirmative response by the component supplier, generating and transmitting an authorization letter to the contract manufacturer, the authorization letter authorizing the contract manufacturer to purchase the component directly from the component supplier.

74. (New) The storage medium of claim 73, wherein the identifying purchase prices of components that are incurred by a contract manufacturer is performed by:

receiving information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer; and

mapping the information received from the contract manufacturer to information relating to components purchased by the buyer;

wherein the information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer and the information relating to components purchased by the buyer include:

a component number;

a component name;

a component description;

a component purchase price; and

a component availability.

75. (New) The storage medium of claim 74, wherein the receiving information relating to components purchased by the contract manufacturer includes receiving the information in response to a notification awarding a contract bid to the contract manufacturer.

76. (New) The storage medium of claim 75, wherein the information is received via at least one of:

- a website of the buyer;
- email; and
- an extranet.

77. (New) The storage medium of claim 74, wherein the mapping includes mapping component information to at least one commodity.

78. (New) The storage medium of claim 73, wherein the buyer is the manufacturing enterprise.

79. (New) The storage medium of claim 73, wherein the contract manufacturer is the supplier enterprise.

80. (New) The storage medium of claim 73, wherein the component supplier is the supplier enterprise.

81. (New) The storage medium of claim 73, wherein the request comprises:
part numbers subject to authorization;
descriptions of the part numbers;
component volumes; and
contract price per unit.

82. (New) The storage medium method of claim 73, wherein the affirmative response by the component supplier includes a notification indicating approval of the request.

83. (New) The storage medium of claim 82, wherein the authorization letter

comprises an attachment comprising:

guidelines for the contract manufacturer to follow, comprising:

keeping pricing information confidential for a period of time;

the authorization is restricted to part numbers provided with the letter; and

providing copies of purchase orders between the contract manufacturer

and the component supplier to the buyer for tracking and reconciliation purposes; and

a request to provide a production bill of materials that factors in revisions to the purchase prices of components that reflect the purchase price available to the buyer.